

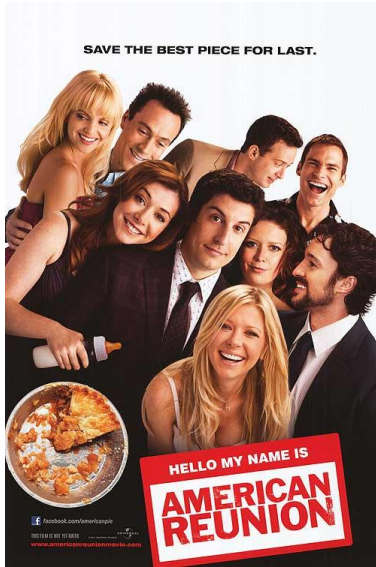
In Theaters

“American Reunion”

Great ensemble cast makes this reunion a success



By Capt. Tristan Hinderliter



In an early scene in “American Reunion,” Steve Stifler (played by Seann William Scott) defecates in a cooler of beer belonging to a group of cocky, obnoxious high schoolers on the beach, after the teenagers had fled following a disagreement with our protagonists. In Stifler’s defense, they had it coming.

For the next two hours, we’re in for more antisocial behavior, and laughs, in spades. We would expect nothing less from the Stifmeister.

Suffice to say, fans of the original “American Pie” and the two subsequent films will not be disappointed. Jim, Michelle, Oz, Kevin, Finch, Stifler: welcome back. We’ve missed you.

All the main actors, and most of the supporting cast, have returned for “American Reunion,” the best installment yet in this comedy franchise that many Millennials, including myself, have come of age with.

A hilarious opening sequence involving Jim (Jason Biggs), a laptop, a tube sock, a bath and a young child sets the tone for this very well done, satisfying movie. Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg, who directed the film and wrote the screenplay, are working with great characters here, and with actors that can pull it off with style.

The class of 1999 reunites in East Great Falls, Mich., for – oddly – their 13-year high school reunion. Jim and Michelle (Alyson Hannigan) and their son arrive in town and stay with Jim’s dad (Eugene Levy), whose wife – Jim’s mother – passed away three years ago.

The first night, Jim meets up with Stifler, Finch (Eddie Kaye Thomas), Oz (Chris Klein) and Kevin (Thomas Ian Nicholas) at a bar. “The Hangover” comes to mind, when, at last call, Stifler orders them a tray full of tequila shots and makes a pithy toast which I cannot repeat in this family-friendly newspaper. Smashcut to the next morning, when Jim wakes up on his kitchen floor, naked except for a T-shirt.

Clearly Jim and the rest of the crew are in for a long weekend. Stifler will have a party. Michelle will reminisce about band camp. In the hands of lesser directors, the movie may have turned into a clumsy hodgepodge of sketch comedy scenes shoehorned into a feature-length film, but Hurwitz and Schlossbert deftly coalesce the material into a neat and tidy package. With callback after callback to the earlier films, the material is nostalgic, but still feels fresh.

Fans of late-’90s music will love the soundtrack, with songs by Semisonic, Lit, Montell Jordan, Boyz II Men and the Verve Pipe. Matt Nathanson’s cover of “Laid,” soaring at the end, is a perfect final sonic salute to the zeitgeist of the earlier movies.

“American Reunion” checks all the boxes for what we would expect from it – and then some. After the past four movies, we really feel like we know these characters. It’s sad to say goodbye.

“American Reunion” is rated R for language, nudity, sexual references and drug use.